

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANILA 05557 01 OF 02 110933Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----079587 110944Z /15
O 110730Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4055

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 5557

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, RP
SUBJ: APPROACH TO THE GOP

REF: STATE 092191

1. SUMMARY. I MET FOR ONE HOUR MORNING OF APRIL 11 AND DELIVERED REFTEL MESSAGE INFULL WITH EMPHASES AS INDICATED, ESPECIALLY THAT IT REFLECTS THINKING OF SECRETARY AND IS DESTINED FOR MARCOS AS-WELL AS ROMULO. I ALSO LEFT TEXT OF TALKINGPOINTS AS INSTRUCTED. PRESENT WAS AMBASSADOR MABILANGAN AS NOTE TAKER. ROMULO LISTENED ATTENTIVELY THROUGHOUT AND WHEN I FINISHED HE EMBARKED UPON WIDE-RANGING COMMENTARY IN DEFENSE PRESIDENT MARCOS' POST-ELECTION LAW AND ORDER MEASURES AND IN ATTACK UPON FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WHOSE REPORTS HAVE POISONED AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND LED DEPARTMENT OF STATE ASTRAY. DISCUSSION WAS ANIMATED WITHIN BOUNDS, AND AT END ROMULO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AND AGREED TO VERY CLOSE DIALOGUE ON SITUATION AS REQUESTED BY US.

2. ROMULO SAID HIS REACTION TO MY PRESENTATION WAS THAT HE CONSIDERED IT A THOROUGHLY UNFAIR AND UNJUST APPRAISAL. THE NOISE BARRAGE ON APRIL 6 FOR EXAMPLE, RESULTED IN THE STONING OF HOUSES, THE KILLING OF ONE WOMAN, INJURIES TO OTHERS, DISRUPTION OF TRAFFICE, ETC. NONETHELESS, THE
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PRESIDENT PERMITTED IT AND TOLD THE POLICE NOT TO INTERFERE PROVIDED THE PARTICIPANTS DISPERSED BY 1:00 A.M., WHICH THEY DID, BUT NOT BEFORE DISTRUBUTING LEAFLETS CALLING FOR A SO-CALLED PROTEST DEMONSTRATION ON MAY 8. ALTHOUGH WARNED AGAINST SUCH A DEMONSTRATION BY ALL MEANS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING MEDIA, THE DEMONSTRATION LEADERS MET WITH AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS TO PLAN THE DEMONSTRATION, AND ASSEMBLED WITHOUT

PERMIT IN SEVERAL PLACES IN MANILA AND DESPITE POLICE WARNINGS
ISSUED TO TANADA AT THE DEMONSTRATION SITE, PROCEEDED TO
MARCH WITH PLACARDS CALLING FOR REVOLUTION AND OTHER
SUBVERSIVE STATEMENTS SUCH AS "DOWN WITH THE GOVERNMENT"
AND "THIS IS WAR."

3. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MARCOS HAD NO ALTERNATIVE, ACCORDING
TO ROMULO, BUT TO TERMINATE THE ILLEGAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE IT
DEVELOPED INTO A REPETITION OF THE BLOODSHED AND DESTRUCTION
EXPERIENCED TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY. THERE WAS NOTHING VINDICTIVE IN
THIS ACTION, "WHY SHOULD THE VICTORS BE VINDICTIVE?"
OPPOSITION CANDIDATES WERE ARRESTED NOT AS SUCH BUT BECAUSE
THEY INSISTED UPON PARTICIPATING IN AN ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATION.

4. ROMULO SAID THAT THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS PRESENT
AT THE MEETING IN WHICH THE DEMONSTRATION WAS PLANNED WERE
THE ONES WHO WROTE THE DISPATCHES READ IN THE UNITED STATES
AND UPON WHICH THE DEPARTMENT APPEARS TO HAVE BASED
ITS APPRAISAL OF PRESIDENT MARCOS' DEFENSE OF LAW AND ORDER.
IN FACT, THE DEMONSTRATION WAS STAGED BY CERTAIN ELEMENTS
FOR THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN ORDER TO PREJUDICE THEIR
DISPATCHES AND INFLUENCE AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST
THE MARCOS ADMINISTRATION. THE STARS & STRIPES FOR APRIL 9,
FOR EXAMPLE, IS FILLED WITH UNTRUE
ALLEGATION OF ELECTION
ABUSES. THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WERE ACUTALLY LED AROUND
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BY LUPITA CONCIO, THE SISTER OF AQUINO. "WE BELIEVE SOME
OF THOSE FOREIGNERS WITH THEM WERE NOT NEWSPAPERMEN AT ALL
BUT COMMUNISTS." EVEN PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS LEAFLETS WERE
CIRCULATED CLAIMING THE ELECTIONS HAD BEEN RIGGED. "THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE SHOULDN'T FALL SO EASILY INTO THE HANDS
OF THE OPPOSITION."

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EXDIS

5. AS TO THE HOUSE SEARCH AND WARRANT FOR THE ARREST OF MS. PLANAS, ROMULO ASSERTED THAT HER HOUSE WAS A MEETING PLACE FOR THE COMMUNISTS NEW PEPOLES ARMY AND THAT POLICE WITH SEARCH WARRANTS FOUND DOCUMENTARY PROOF OF THIS AS WELL AS A CARBINE AND AMMUNITION.

6. IN THE MIDST OF ROMULO'S HARANGUE AGAINST FOREIGN REPORTING I ASKED HOW HE HAD FOUND THE NEWSWEEK AND TIME STORIES WHICH, OF COURSE, RECEIVED WIDE CIRCULATION. HE BROKE STRIDE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT NEWSWEEK ARTICLE HAD SEEMED "BALANCED," BUT HE HAD NOT SEEN THE TIME STORY. ROMULO DIGRESSED TO RECALL WIDESPREAD DEMONSTRATIONS IN 1972 WHICH HAD RESULTED IN DAMAGE AND INJURY AND WERE IN THE PRESIDENT'S MIND IN MOVING AGAINST THE PRESENT DEMONSTRATION. ROMULO THEN GAVE HIS VERSION OF CIA INTERVENTION, ALLEGING HE HAD ONCE BEEN ASKED TO WITHDRAW IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE AGAINST MAGSAYSAY IN ORDER THAT THE LATTER COULD MORE HANDILY DEFEAT PRESIDENT QUIRINO, WHO WAS COMPARED TO A PIG. THIS MOTIVATED ME TO MENTION THE INSULTING REFERENCE TO PRESIDENT CARTER FEATURED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE APRIL 8 ISSUE OF THE EVENING POST, A NEWSPAPER EDITED BY THE WIFE OF PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT TUVERA (SEPTTEL). ROMULO SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO IT.

7. I POINTED OUT THAT ROMULO BEST UNDERSTOOD THE AMERICAN SCENE AND COULD APPRECIATE THE CONTRADICTION IN PERCEPTION
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BETWEEN REPORTS OF THE ELECTION AS THE MOST PEACEFUL EVER HELD IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE EXPLANATION THAT IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO ARREST HUNDREDS, INCLUDING CANDIDATES FROM THE DEFEATED OPPOSITION, IN ORDER TO AVERT A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER TO PUBLIC LAW AND ORDER. ROMULO SAID THAT EXTREME MEASURES, INCLUDING GUARD DOGS, HAD BEEN RESORTED TO IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH TO PREVENT PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. I REPLIED THAT WHEN THIS OCCURRED IT HAD BEEN OPPOSED BY A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND HAD BECOME AN ISSUE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. I ADDED THAT IT IS AGAINST SUCH BACKGROUND THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD PERCEIVE THE SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AND HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING THE INCARCERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTION.

8. I TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO BRING THE DISCUSSION TO A CLOSE BY REMINDING ROMULO OF THE EXPRESS DESIRE OF THE DEPARTMENT, REFLECTIVE OF THE THINKING OF THE SECRETARY HIMSELF, TO ESTABLISH A VERY CLOSE DIALOGUE ON THE SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AND HOW IT MAY AFFECT THE VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE. ROMULO CHARACTERIZED OUR DISCUSSION AS A PART OF SUCH A DIALOGUE AND READILY AGREED TO MAINTAIN IT. HE DID NOT RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO REITERATE THAT THE DEPARTMENT APPEARS TO HAVE ACCEPTED DISTORTED PUBLIC REPORTING WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES. I POINTED OUT THAT I WAS CONSULTING WITH HIM AND REMINDED HIM AGAIN THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN HOLDING OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON THE SITUATION TO A MINIMUM DESPITE HIGH-LEVEL CONCERN; ALTHOUGH THAT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN IN THE ABSENCE OF MANIFEST GOP FLEXIBILITY.
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